

# VT-7 wins Secretary of Navy Safety Award

By Penny Randall  
Staff Writer

Training Squadron Seven (VT-7) is a safe place to work.

In fact, according to the Secretary of the Navy VT-7 is the safest training squadron in the entire Navy – a distinction that has earned them the 2010 Secretary of the Navy Safety Excellence Award.

“We’re honored to be recognized for our hard work in safety,” said Cmdr. William Doster, commanding officer of Training Squadron Seven. “It’s an award to the entire squadron.”

Doster added he believes it wasn’t just one thing that the squadron accomplished.

“It’s a command culture that we believe rather than a task, it’s something we work continually to maintain. This award is special for the safety officer and his team. He is the one who works hard when it comes to submitting hazards and recommendations.”

VT-7’s Safety Officer Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Plaisier modestly said it is the hard work of his previous safety officers that helped the squadron achieve three prestigious safety awards in one year.

“It’s a team effort,” Plaisier said. “We can dictate policy, but it’s up to instructors and students to implement all the guidelines we put out. Using common

sense on a daily basis has helped with the great safety record of more than 100,000 hours since our last mishap – something that is practically unheard of.”

In a recent message announcing the winners from various commands afloat and ashore, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus said: “My congratulations to all Secretary of the Navy Safety Excellence recipients. Safety and risk management are intrinsic to effectively prepare for and complete our mission, whether at home or deployed in harm’s way. What you have accomplished in the last year is proof-positive of your commitment to a ‘Mission First, Safety Always’ command culture, each other, safety excellence, the nation, and the advent of the Department of the Navy as a world class safety organization. You have justly earned the right to fly my SECNAV safety flag for the next year.”

This year, VT-7 also received the Admiral John H. Towers Flight Safety Award and the Chief of Naval Operations Safety Award.

VT-7’s Safety Department in 2009 was phenomenal as evidenced by achieving the highest grade possible of “Outstanding” on both the NATOPS Unit Evaluation in August 2009 and the CNATRA Safety/Standardization Evaluation in October 2009. CNATRA evaluators lauded VT-7 programs as the “best in the last 12 inspec-

tions,” -- “well above average.”

The squadron was noted for having the “best ASAP utilization in CNATRA.”

Aviation Safety Awareness Program is when students and instructors make comments on what happened during a flight, whether it is an error, something that the approach controllers did or a weather related event. VT-7 led all of CNATRA in ASAP reporting for 2009.

“This is where we get real time feedback,” Doster said. “The ASAP program creates a good line of communication.”

In 2009, the squadron safely executed 13 detachments, including nine carrier qualification detachments. Seventy-five student aviators earned their wings in the T-45C Goshawk flying more than 90 sorties per day, one of the largest daily flight schedules in the Navy. The squadron’s production record for 2009 is impressive – 21,169 flight hours, 18,288 sorties, 1,312 carrier arrested landings.

The Secretary of the Navy Safety Award winner will be formally recognized during a ceremony on Oct. 4 at the U.S. Navy Memorial and Naval Heritage Center Theatre in Washington, D.C.

Doster said he plans to be in attendance with several of his staff members.

“It takes more work to stay on top of the game,” he said. “I believe we are on the right track in VT-7.”